

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 PM-05
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9277
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4776

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINT PINS LE SY IS UN
SUBJ: REMARKS OF BACHIR GEMAYEL

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. BACHIR GEMAYEL TOLD EMBOFF ON AUGUST 16 THAT HE PERSONALLY OPPOSED THE AUGUST 9 CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT FOR EAST BEIRUT, BUT WOULD NEVERTHELESS RESPECT IT. BACHIR CLAIMED THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT LIVE UP TO THEIR PART OF THE BARGAIN, WHICH HE ALLEGED INCLUDED TOTAL WITHDRAWAL FROM EAST BEIRUT. HE SAID THAT HE WAS TOTALLY OPPOSED TO THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE LEBANESE ARMY UNIT IN KAWKABA TO TIBNIN. HE REJECTED U.S. COUNSELS OF RESTRAINT AND SAID THEY WOULD LEAD ONLY TO SYRIAN DOMINATION OR PARTITION. COMMENT: BACHIR, FOR HIM, SHOWED SURPRISING MODERATION ON BEIRUT AND AN ABSOLUTELY UNCOMPROMISING ATTITUDE ON SOUTH LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF MET AUGUST 16 WITH PHALANGE MILITARY LEADER BACHIR GEMAYEL AT THE LATTER'S HOME IN ASHRAFIYAH. BACHIR
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SAID THE FOLLOWING.

3. THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT FOR EAST BEIRUT.

A. BACHIR SAID HE PERSONALLY OPPOSED THE AUGUST 9 CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT FOR EAST BEIRUT, BUT THAT HE WOULD NEVERTHELESS RESPECT IT BECAUSE THE PHALANGE

HAD FORMALLY ENDORSED IT. HIS FIGHTERS WOULD REFRAIN FROM FIRING ON THE SYRIANS FOR THE TIME BEING, BUT WOULD NOT DO SO INDEFINITELY IF THE SYRIANS DID NOT SHOW GOOD FAITH (I.E., FURTHER WITHDRAWALS FROM EAST BEIRUT). IF IT WERE UP TO HIM, HE WOULD GIVE THE SYRIANS 48 HOURS TO GET OUT OF ASHRAFIYAH. THE PHALANGE PARTY, HOWEVER, HAD DECIDED NOT TO RUSH THE SYRIANS AND TO GIVE THEM SOME TIME. (BACHIR REFUSED TO SAY HOW LONG. CAMILLE CHAMOUN IS SAYING, HOWEVER, THAT AS A RESULT OF AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH HIM ON AUGUST 14, NLP WOULD GIVE THEM A WEEK.)

B. THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING, ACCORDING TO BACHIR:

--THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA WOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE STREETS OF ASHRAFIYAH;

--THE SYRIANS WOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE EASTERN PART OF ASHRAFIYAH;

--FORTY-EIGHT HOURS AFTER THEIR INITIAL WITHDRAWAL, THE SYRIANS WOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE QARANTINA BRIDGE;

--TEN TO FIFTEEN DAYS AFTER THEIR INITIAL WITHDRAWAL, THE SYRIANS WOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE REST OF ASHRAFIYAH, INCLUDING THE RIZK TOWER, AS WELL AS THE MURR TOWER IN
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WEST BEIRUT. THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD TAKE OVER BOTH TOWERS.

C. BACHIR SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THESE WERE THE TERMS OF THE CEASE-FIRE, BECAUSE HE HAD SEEN THE WRITTEN VERSION AS RECORDED BY THE PHALANGE OF THE AGREEMENT. (COMMENT: AS IS THE CASE WITH ALMOST EVERY AGREEMENT IN LEBANON, THERE IS APPARENTLY A BASIC MISUNDERSTANDING OVER THE TERMS. THE SYRIANS EVIDENTLY BELIEVE THE AGREEMENT CALLS FOR NOTHING MORE THAN THEIR WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EASTERN PART OF ASHRAFIYAH AND THE QARANTINA BRIDGE. THE PHALANGE EVIDENTLY BELIEVES IT CALLS FOR TOTAL SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM EAST BEIRUT. END COMMENT.)

4. THE SYRIANS.

A. BACHIR DID NOT BELIEVE THE SYRIANS WOULD LIVE UP TO WHAT HE UNDERSTOOD TO BE THEIR END OF THE BARGAIN. THEY WOULD NEVER GIVE UP QARANTINA BRIDGE, MUCH LESS THE RIZK TOWER. (BEGIN COMMENT. IN FACT, LEBANESE GENDARMES TOOK OVER THE BRIDGE FROM THE SYRIANS THE MORNING OF AUGUST 16, ALTHOUGH THE SYRIANS REMAINED IN BUILDINGS WITHIN 200 METERS OF THE BRIDGE. END COMMENT.)

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B. THE SYRIANS HAD AGREED TO THE CEASE-FIRE ONLY BECAUSE IT WAS IN THEIR MILITARY INTEREST TO DO SO. THEY WERE NOW IN A STRONGER POSITION THAN BEFORE BECAUSE THEY HAD ELIMINATED THEIR ISOLATED POSITIONS IN EAST BEIRUT. (CHAMOUN MADE SAME POINT TO AMBASSADOR, SAYING NLP HAD ALLOWED SYRIANS TO WITHDRAW GARRISONS SURROUNDED BY NLP FIGHTERS.) ALSO, SHORTLY BEFORE THE CEASE-FIRE, PHALANGE "TANKS" HAD SCORED 15 DIRECT HITS ON THE RIZK TOWER, THUS INTIMIDATING THE SYRIANS SOMEWHAT. (COMMENT: CHRISTIANS DID KNOCK SIZEABLE HOLE IN THE TOWER. SYRIANS REPORTEDLY CONVINCED THIS WAS DONE WITH NEW AMERICAN WEAPON. END COMMENT.)

C. BACHIR CLAIMED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO GET THE SYRIANS OUT WAS TO DRIVE THEM OUT. HIS FIGHTERS IN BEIRUT HAD ALL THE WEAPONS AND ARMS THEY NEEDED. HE ADDED SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTORILY THAT HE COULD "NOT AFFORD A WAR OF ATTRITION" AND THAT THE ONLY SENSIBLE TACTIC FOR THE PHALANGE WAS "ALL-OUT WAR." (COMMENT: SUCH AN ASSERTION WOULD SEEM TO IMPLY THAT BACHIR CONTINUES TO
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BELIEVES THE ISRAELIS WILL COME TO HIS RESCUE IN EXTREMIS. BACHIR, HOWEVER, ASSERTED THAT HE WAS NOT COUNTING ON ISRAEL OR ANYBODY ELSE TO HELP HIM. END COMMENT.)

5. SOUTH LEBANON.

A. BACHIR SAID THAT HE OPPOSED TOTALLY THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE LEBANESE ARMY UNIT IN KAWKABA TO TIBNIN. HE ALLEGED THAT THE UNIT WAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SYRIANS, THAT IT WOULD ENDANGER THE SAFETY OF THE CHRISTIANS IN THE ENCLAVES, AND THAT IT WOULD TRY TO CLOSE THE GOOD FENCE.

B. BACHIR REPEATED THAT THE ISRAELIS CONTROLLED THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN SOUTH LEBANON. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT "IS SUPPOSE" THAT THE MILITIAS WOULD FIRE ON ANY HELICOPTERS WHICH TRIED TO TRANSPORT LEBANESE TROOPS TO TIBNIN AND WOULD SHELL TIBNIN IF LEBANESE TROOPS MOVED THERE.

6. REACTION TO U.S. ADVICE.

A. EMBOFF TOLD BACHIR THAT WE BELIEVED IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO: (1) SHOW RESTRAINT AND ALLOW THE PRESENT CEASE-FIRE IN BEIRUT TO WORK; AND (2) ENCOURAGE THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS NOT TO OPPOSE ENTRY OF THE LEBANESE ARMY TO TIBNIN. BACHIR REJECTED THIS ADVICE ON BOTH COUNTS.

B. HE CLAIMED "THE U.S. DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE ARABS." HE SAID U.S. ADVICE, IF FOLLOWED, WOULD LEAD TO SYRIAN DOMINATION OF LEBANON OR PARTITION. FOR GOOD MEASURE, HE ADDED THAT U.S. SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT SARKIS HAD SAME EFFECT, SINCE SARKIS WAS ONLY A PRO-SYRIAN AND NOT A REAL LEBANESE PRESIDENT. HE REPEATED, HOWEVER, THAT HE
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WOULD RESPECT THE BEIRUT CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT FOR THE TIME BEING, DESPITE HIS OPPOSITION TO IT.

7. COMMENT: BACHIR, FOR HIM, SHOWED SURPRISING MODERATION ON BEIRUT, BUT AN ABSOLUTELY UNCOMPROMISING ATTITUDE ON SOUTH LEBANON. HE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT ALTHOUGH THE PHALANGE PARTY MIGHT MODIFY HIS BEHAVIOR, U.S. ADVICE WOULD NOT. END COMMENT.)
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